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SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL

THE

# SANDMAN

THE

KINDLY
ONES

DIRECT SALES

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Waiting for you.

SO.

SO.

SO...

YOU KNOW THAT I'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

The last time we had this conversation, you threw a loaf of bread at me.

I REMEMBER.

Here.

HM. YOU WANT TO MAKE SOME PIGEONS?

If that is what you wish.

I was expecting you to throw it at me--to tell me off; to shout at me.

IT'S TOO *LATE* FOR THAT, MY BROTHER. IT'S MUCH TOO LATE FOR THAT.

I am tired, my sister. I am very tired.

HEY! MATTHEW?

UH?

SHIT!

=KAAR=

STAY OUT OF REACH OF ITS MOUTH. I THINK WE CAN ASSUME THAT IT'S POISONOUS.

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

IT WAS CALLED *NYBBAS*. OR POSSIBLY IT IS MERELY A NYBBAS, I FORGET.

IT WAS ONE OF LORD MORPHEUS'S PRISONERS. ALL OF THEM WERE FREED ABOUT AN HOUR AGO --I PRESUME BY THE LADIES.

A COUPLE OF THEM TOOK REFUGE IN THE LIBRARY. I... DEALT WITH THEM...

SHIT. THEY'RE ALL FREE?

THE ONES THAT WERE IN DARKNESS. THE THINGS HE PUT IN THE CHEST ARE STILL SAFE.

HOW MANY OF THEM ARE LEFT IN THE CASTLE?

A *FEW*. I'VE DEALT WITH THOSE THAT TRIED TO HARM ME OR THE BOY. MOST OF THEM FLED.

YOU AND YOUR SWISS ARMY KNIFE TAKE ON THE WORLD, HUH?

SO: YOU GOING TO TRY AND *KILL* ME NOW?

I *OUGHT* TO, BUT... HELL, BIRD. LIFE'S TOO *SHORT*.

WELL, *THANKS*. I THINK.

SO WHERE'S THE BOY? WHERE'S DANIEL? HE OKAY?

HE'S *FINE*. SAY HI TO MATTHEW, DANIEL.

HEY, KID. ATTABOY. YOU REMEMBER ME?

birdee.

KIND OF A LATE DEVELOPER, HUH?

*MATTHEW?* WHAT HAS BEFALLEN OUR LORD, EH? HOW CROAKS THE RAVEN?

HE'S OFF ON THE BORDERS OF NIGHTMARE. HE SENT ME BACK HERE WITH SOME OF HIS *STUFF*. TO WAIT WITH IT, UNTIL HE COMES *BACK*.

HOW DOES IT GO...?

"THERE'S BUT THREE FURIES FOUND IN SPACIOUS HELL; BUT IN A GREAT MAN'S BREAST THREE THOUSAND DWELL."

WHATEVER.

YOU ARE A STRANGE ONE, MY BROTHER.

I DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO CAN BE SO COMPLETELY STRAIGHTFORWARD, AND SO UTTERLY DEVIOUS AT THE SAME TIME.

Devious?

MM. WRONG WORD, MAYBE. BUT THE ***STUFF*** YOU DO. WHERE YOU ***DO*** IT, AND YOU WON'T EVEN ADMIT TO YOUR***SELF*** IT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING. WHAT WOULD ***YOU*** CALL IT?

I am afraid I do not follow you.

OF ***COURSE*** YOU DO. I'VE KNOWN YOU LONGER THAN ***ANYBODY.*** YOU'VE BEEN DOWN ***MUCH*** FARTHER THAN THIS IN THE PAST, ***AND*** YOU'VE COME BACK.

THEY TOOK THE ***DREAMING*** AWAY FROM YOU, ONCE, AND YOU RE-GAINED IT. ***REMEMBER?***

THE ***ONLY*** REASON YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF INTO THIS MESS IS BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE YOU ***WANTED*** TO BE.

THERE'S ***PERSONAL*** RESPONSIBILITY ***TOO***, Y'KNOW? NOT ONLY THE KIND YOU'RE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT.

I JUST WANT TO KNOW ***WHY?***

I did not plan this, my sister.

I had imagined that I would be able to keep events here in check. I intended to play a waiting game, in which, ultimately, no harm was done.

Had I remained in the Dreaming, the Kindly Ones could have done no damage to me directly, nor been able to do anything irreparable to the Dreaming.

No one was hurt I could not have restored.

But I was forced to leave the Dreaming--

DON'T YOU START BLAMING NUALA FOR THIS. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LEAVE, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING.

No... you are right, of course...

It has nothing to do with Nuala.

It has everything to do with me.

Since I killed my son... the Dreaming has not been the same... or perhaps I was no longer the same. I still had my obligations...

But even the freedom of the Dreaming can be a cage, of a kind, my sister.

DESTRUCTION SIMPLY LEFT. TOOK DOWN HIS SIGIL, SAID HE WASN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REALM OF DESTRUCTION ANYMORE, THAT IT WAS NO LONGER HIS AFFAIR, AND TOOK OFF INTO THE FOREVER.

YOU COULD HAVE DONE THAT.

No. I could not.

NO. YOU COULDN'T, COULD YOU?

WHAT WAS THAT RUMBLING?

THAT WAS THE ROOTS OF THE DREAMING.

IT WAS A QUAKE.

AAAAAAAA

AAAAAA

NO!

MISTER THE BORGHAL RANTIPOLE? HELLO?

ARE YOU THERE?

WHERE DID YOU GO? HELLOOOO?

LUX

AND NUALA SPIES THE HILL-PORTAL, AND URGES HER PONY TOWARD IT; AND THE WIND IS ICE IN HER FACE.

AND THIS IS PASSING STRANGE IN FAERIE, WHERE IT IS ALWAYS MOST CLEMENT AND GENTLE.

AND THE POISON SPILLS INTO LOKI'S MOUTH AND EYES; HE WRITHES, AND A CITY FALLS: AND IN THE MOMENT OF PAIN HE GAINS A CERTAIN CLARITY.

THE MASTER MANIPULATOR REALIZES HOW, ULTIMATELY-- HOW STRANGELY, HOW ELEGANTLY-- HE TOO HAD BEEN MANIPULATED.

PERHAPS THE SOUND HE MAKES IS LAUGHTER.

AND A HUNDRED HUGE RAVENS FLAP THEIR WINGS IN YOUR DREAMS AND RAISE THEIR BLACK EYES TO THE STORM, EXPECTANTLY.

DID YOU FEEL THAT, DREAM KING?

WE ARE RIPPING YOUR WORLD APART.

I felt it.

WE HAVE FREED THE POWERS THAT YOU HAD CAGED.

I know.

DREAM-KING, WE ARE DESTROYING THE DREAMING. CAN YOU NOT FEEL IT?

Yes. I can.

WHAT WILL YOU DO, TO STOP US?

WHAT *CAN* YOU DO?

*ENOUGH!*

I HAVE HAD *QUITE* ENOUGH OF THIS.

WE ARE MERELY PERFORM-ING OUR FUNCTION, LADY.

LEAVE US ALONE. THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND MY BROTHER.

THERE.

WELL... WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH YOU?

They are destroying the Dreaming. What else can we do?

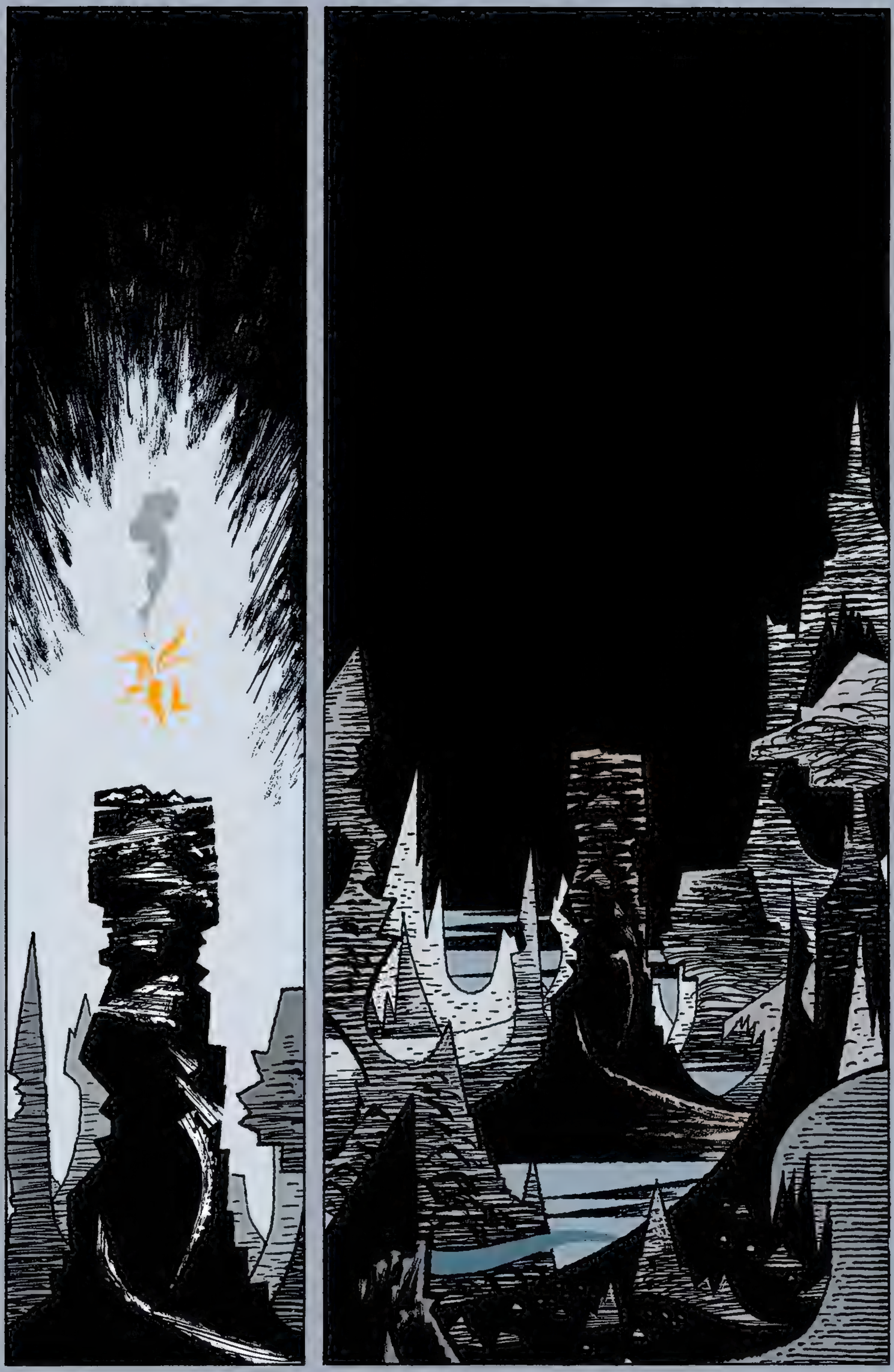
I have made all the preparations necessary.

HMPH. YOU'VE BEEN MAKING THEM FOR AGES. YOU JUST DIDN'T LET YOURSELF KNOW THAT WAS WHAT YOU WERE DOING.

If you say so.

DREAM?

GIVE ME YOUR HAND.



THE LADY NUALA. *WHERE* ARE YOU GOING?

I HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR THOSE WHO WOULD REJECT MY GUARDIANSHIP, AND DO NOT RECALL HAVING GIVEN YOU PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE BOUNDS OF FAERIE...

MY LADY.

I *AM* LEAVING. LET ME GO, OR IMPRISON ME, OR DESTROY ME; FOR I SHALL NOT WILLINGLY *STAY* HERE A MOMENT MORE.

YOU UNGRATEFUL *WRETCH*. I'LL MAKE YOU WISH YOU HAD NEVER BEEN--

IT WAS *TRUE*, THEN, CLURACAN. YOUR FORETELLING.

LADY, I HAD HOPED IT WOULD NOT BE SO...

GO AWAY. GO WHERESOEVER YOU WISH. I CARE NOT.

Hello

I'll just spend it on ~~beer~~ dog food

Hello

Hello

Hullo. You're late.

Hello

BARNABAS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE LOSTED.

I will never *ever*-- as long as I *live*--let you out of my sight again for a single, solitary *second*.

It's not even like they *have* proper ice creams at Disneyland anyway-- running off like that after a chocolate-covered banana... I *ask* you...

It's been *two* weeks. *Two* weeks.

BUT I DID LOOK FOR YOU. ALL OVER.

Hmph. Where were you looking? Patagonia? Mars? The Emerald City?

UM. PLACES LIKE THAT.

I spent over a week on the run, I nearly *starved* to *death*. This kind gentleman took pity on my plight.

HE'S A *GOOD* DOG, MISSIE. THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED TO SEE SUCH FUN, BUT HE'S NOT *SO* LITTLE. AND HE TALKS PRETTY GOOD, FOR A DOG.

I MUST GIVE YOU A PRESENT, FOR FINDING MY. DOGGIE.

HMMMMMM MMMMMM.

DO YOU WANT PALACES AND GOLDEN TOUCHES AND, OH! NEVER DYING AND THINGS?

NOPE. UH-UH. NO WAY. NOT ME, MA'AM.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I *KNOW* YOU, MISSY. I THINK I DO. I'M KIND OF YOURS ANYWAY, AIN'T I?

KIND OF.

T'AIN'T *SAFE* TO ASK FAVORS OF YOUR KIND, EVEN IF I *EARNED* 'EM. OTHERWISE I COULD FIND MYSELF SPITTING OUT FLOWER PETALS AND SILVER DOLLARS EVERY TIME I SPEAK.

THAT'S AS I UNDERSTAND IT, ANYHOW.

I'M HAPPY WITH JUST A *THANK-YOU-KINDLY*, AND MAYBE SOMETIMES THE BARNEY-DOG CAN COME FIND ME AND GAB A BIT.

I THINK I'M GOING TO *MISS* HIM.

WELL, OKAY.

OH, BARNABAS. I *AM SO* PLEASED TO SEE YOU. I THINK *BAD* THINGS HAVE HAPPENED. I FEEL THEM IN MY SOCKS.

YOU REMEMBER MY BROTHER? DREAM-WHO-YOU-MET?

Tall, officious, rather stuffy? Looks like he doesn't get *out* enough?

Hello

UM. YES. HIM.

HE'S GONE. HE'S NOT IN MY MIND ANY MORE.

I'm sure he can take care of himself.

I... I DON'T THINK SO...

I OPENED THIS NIGHT SPOT FOR MY OWN ENTERTAINMENT. AND, FOR A WHILE, IN THE NIGHT, IT ENTERTAINED ME.

BUT THE DIVERSION BEGINS TO PALL. ONCE AGAIN, I PERCEIVE THE VOID BENEATH THE SURFACE OF ALL THINGS.

ALL THAT KEEPS ME GOING NOW IS THE DESIRE TO SEE HOW IT ALL COMES OUT.

OH, YOU KNOW...THE WHOLE THING. THE UNIVERSE.

HEOW **WOSH** CUNNZSH OUGK?

I HAD THE HUBRIS ORIGINALLY TO REGARD MYSELF AS A COLLABORATOR, AS A CO-AUTHOR...

VERY RAPIDLY I FOUND MYSELF REDUCED TO THE STATUS OF CHARACTER, FOLLOWING SOMETHING OF A DISAGREEMENT IN THE FUNDAMENTAL DIRECTION OF THE CREATION.

NOW I SOMETIMES FEEL I'M SIMPLY WAITING AROUND TO SEE WHICH OF US WAS RIGHT, WHICH WAS WRONG.

BUT EVEN IF IT TURNS OUT THAT I **WAS** RIGHT, WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO ME?

SO--WHAT--I GET THE THRILL OF STANDING AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE, AND SAYING "SEE, I WAS RIGHT ALL THE TIME?" NO, I'M BETTER OFF OUT OF IT.

ONE MORE NIGHT. AND THEN THAT'S **IT** FOR LUX, I THINK.

AND WHAT THEN? AYE. THERE'S THE RUB.

RHERH ARE HEOU GKOINGH ZISS TCHINE?

EXIT

WHERE? ANYWHERE. EVERYWHERE. I DON'T KNOW.

I RRIW VFORROW HEOU VFORR EFFER...I NGUSSKKHH.

IF YOU MUST.

EXIT

AM I LATE?

HAL, YOU'D BE LATE TO YOUR OWN FUNERAL. NOW, TAKE THOSE FUCKING SHADES OFF.

PUSH BUTTON FOR ADMITTANCE

LANGUAGE, SWEETIE.

SO: WE'LL JUST ASSUME EVERYTHING **YOU** SAID YESTERDAY WAS RIGHT, AND THAT EVERYTHING **I** SAID WAS WRONG, **SHALL** WE? EASIER THAT WAY.

WHY, **HAL.** THAT'S THE SWEETEST APOLOGY ANYONE'S EVER MADE TO ME.

MM.

SAY, LISTEN, YOU KNOW WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT CLEANING YOUR WORKS? **THAT** WASN'T HOW THE SPIDER WOMEN DIED, THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY DRUG...EXCEPT EACH OTHER...

CHAPEL

TCH. LOCKED.

WELL, YOU DON'T GET IT FROM TOILET SEATS, YOU KNOW.

CHANTAL HAD A KIDNEY REPLACEMENT IN APRIL 1989.

THE DONOR WAS **HIV** POSITIVE, ALTHOUGH SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T **KNOW** IT. SOME WOMAN WHO DIED IN A SHOOTING. BITS OF HER WERE RUSHED TO HOSPITALS ALL OVER. ONE OF HER KIDNEYS WENT INTO CHANTAL.

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN NOW. IT WAS A **FLUKE** IT WASN'T CAUGHT **THEN.**

NOT ALL THE TRANSPLANTEES GOT **AIDS.** EIGHT OUT OF FIFTY-SEVEN PEOPLE, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

ZELDA'S MEDICAL RECORDS.

SO YOU SEE, IT **WAS** INNOCENT. IT REALLY WAS. JUST BAD LUCK.

ROSALITA,,,THERE **ISN'T** ANY INNOCENT. THERE ISN'T ANY **GUILTY.** THERE'S JUST **DEAD.**

EXCUSE ME, BUT WOULD YOU BE THE MIDDAY SERVICE?

THAT'D BE US.

HOW GOES THE QUEST FOR THE TRIPLE GODDESS IN TV SITCOMS?

I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING ON THE BOOK FOR **AGES.**

UMMMM...

HAL, I THINK I'M PREGNANT.

SO WE DON'T BELIEVE IN BIRTH CONTROL ANYMORE, THEN?

WE **DO.** BUT WE DIDN'T USE ANY SPERMICIDE, AND ONE OF THE CONDOMS BROKE.

THERE WE **GO,** THEN. IN THE MIDST OF DEATH, WE ARE IN LIFE.

LET'S GO AND SAY BYE-BYE TO ZELDA.

AFTER **YOU.**

IN A NURSING HOME A LITTLE OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF WYCH CROSS, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX, IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND, MRS. SHORE, WHO IS ON NIGHT DUTY, IS ROUSED FROM A RESTLESS DOZING DREAM IN WHICH HER FATHER (DEAD THESE MANY YEARS) FALLS FROM A CLIFF, SLIPPING THROUGH HER HANDS TO HIS DEATH; AND SHE WAKES WITH HOT TEARS BURNING HER CHEEKS.

Evening
LOCAL SOLICITOR KILLS HIMSELF WHEN GAY LO
WALKS OU

SHE RISES, AND WALKS THE HALLS OF THE HOME. STRANGE NOTIONS CAN TAKE HOLD OF YOU, IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING, AND SHE FANCIES HERSELF, FOR A MOMENT, IN HELL.

PERHAPS IT IS SIMPLY THE FULL OF THE MOON, SHE THINKS; BUT THE HOWLS AND THE MOANS THAT ASSAIL HER FROM EVERY ROOM ARE MORE THAN MERE LUNACY.

THEY HOWL IN THEIR SLEEP LIKE FURIES, SHE THINKS, LIKE BANSHEES, LIKE HARPIES.

SHE CONFIRMS FOR HERSELF THAT THEY STILL SLEEP, THOUGH THEY WRITHE AND MOAN LIKE WOMEN POSSESSED.

THEN SHE HEARS A VOICE, RUSTY AND HOARSE WITH DISUSE, PLEADING THROUGH THE SHADOWS.

HELLO? NURSE? PAUL? *HELLO?* IS ANYBODY *THERE?*

MISTER BURGESS? BLESS ME, IT *IS* YOU.

I...I WAS ASLEEP, WASN'T I? I HAD SUCH DREAMS. THERE WAS A ***CAT***, WHO BECAME A MAN, THE MAN MY FATHER CAUGHT... IT'S A STRANGE... OH, BUT IT'S GONE...

WHERE'S *PAUL?*

YOU MUST BE A ***NEW*** NURSE. I DON'T ***KNOW*** YOU I DON'T...

***PAUL?*** IS THIS ANOTHER NIGHTMARE? ***IS*** IT? IS IT ANOTHER BAD DREAM?

***HUSH*** NOW, DEARIE.

YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR A WHILE NOW. BUT THE NIGHTMARES ARE OVER. YOU'RE WIDE AWAKE, AND THAT'S A BLESSING.

THERE, AND NOTHING'S GOING TO ***HURT*** YOU. IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.

WELCOME BACK, HIPPOLYTA.

WHEN REAL THINGS HAPPEN TO IMAGINARY PEOPLE

WHO ... WHERE ...

I SMELL LIKE SHIT. I ...

WHERE AM I?

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME?

WHAT HAPPENED? THE LAST THING I REMEMBER IS ...

DANIEL ... THEY TOOK DANIEL!

I MUST HAVE HAD SOME KIND OF BREAK-DOWN.

WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?

I'M CALLED LARISSA.

AND YOU ... ARE A PAWN ... WHO BRIEFLY BECAME A KNIGHT ... OR A QUEEN. AND YOU'VE JUST BEEN TAKEN OFF THE BOARD.

YOU'RE TALKING NONSENSE.

WAS I DRUGGED, OR SOMETHING? I WAS LOOKING FOR DANIEL ...

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOUR ACTIONS HAVE ENSURED THAT YOU WILL NEVER SEE DANIEL AGAIN.

HERE. IT'S RED ZINGER.

I'D TAKE A SHOWER, AND THEN START RUNNING, IF I WERE YOU.

LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO WANT TO HURT YOU OR KILL YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE.

INCLUDING ME.

WHEN REAL THINGS HAPPEN TO IMAGINARY PEOPLE

DANIEL?

No...

Not any longer.

SO. IT'S FINISHED.

YES.

WHAT DID WE MAKE? WHAT *WAS* IT, IN THE END?

WHAT IT *ALWAYS* IS. A HANDFUL OF YARN; A LITTLE WEAVING AND STITCHING; SOME EMBROIDERING PERHAPS. A FEW LOOSE ENDS, BUT THAT'S ONLY TO BE EXPECTED...

IT'S THE SAME OLD STORY... WHATEVER IT TURNS INTO ON THE WAY, WHATEVER IT IS YOU ORIGINALLY UNDERTAKE TO SPIN OR KNIT OR WEAVE, KEEP IT GOING LONG ENOUGH AND, IN THE END, MY LILIES, IT'S ALWAYS A WINDING SHEET...

ARE YOU *SATISFIED?*

NIMINY PIMINY, MY PIGEON, REFLECT: AND HOW COULD I *EVER* BE SATISFIED?

IT'S LIKE WE TOLD THAT YOUNG LADY, I TOLD HER, I SAID, YOU'VE MADE YOUR BED AND NOW YOU MUST EAT IT.

EH WELL,

NO REST FOR THE WICKED.

HERE WE GO. TEA FOR THREE. I FOUND A FLORENTINE, A FORTUNE COOKIE, AND A SHIP'S BISCUIT. WHO'S FOR WHAT?

I'LL HAVE THE FLORENTINE.

I'LL HAVE THE SHIP'S BISCUIT. THERE'S MAGGOTY PROTEIN IN THERE, GOOD FOR EYES AND TEETH.

AND THERE WAS DAYS WHEN WE'D BUT A SINGLE EYE AND A TOOTH BETWEEN US... OR *WAS* THAT US? I DON'T REMEMBER...

I'LL TAKE THE FORTUNE COOKIE, MY CORACLE, AND HAVE DONE WITH IT.

WELL? WHAT DOES IT SAY?

HMPH. IT'S NOT WHAT I'D CALL A PROPER FORTUNE.

I LIKED THE LAST ONE. IS IT THE LAST ONE AGAIN? THE ONE ABOUT THE CLASH AND THE FRAY?

IT'S SILLY RUBBISH.

FLOWERS GATHERED IN THE MORNING, AFTERNOON THEY BLOSSOM ON, STILL ARE WITHERED BY THE EVENING: YOU CAN BE ME WHEN I'M GONE.

IT'S NOT EVEN VERY GOOD POETRY.

I WONDER HOW THAT GOT IN THERE?

MORE OF A MOTTO THAN A FORTUNE.

>snf< AT LEAST IT'S NOT A MORAL. WORSE THAN BEGINNINGS, MORALS. I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR THEM. NO TIME AT ALL.

NEVER MIND.

THERE. FOR GOOD OR BAD.

IT'S DONE.

# THE KINDLY ONES


WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN

ART BY MARC HEMPEL

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPS BY ANDROID IMAGES
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
ASSOC. BY SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

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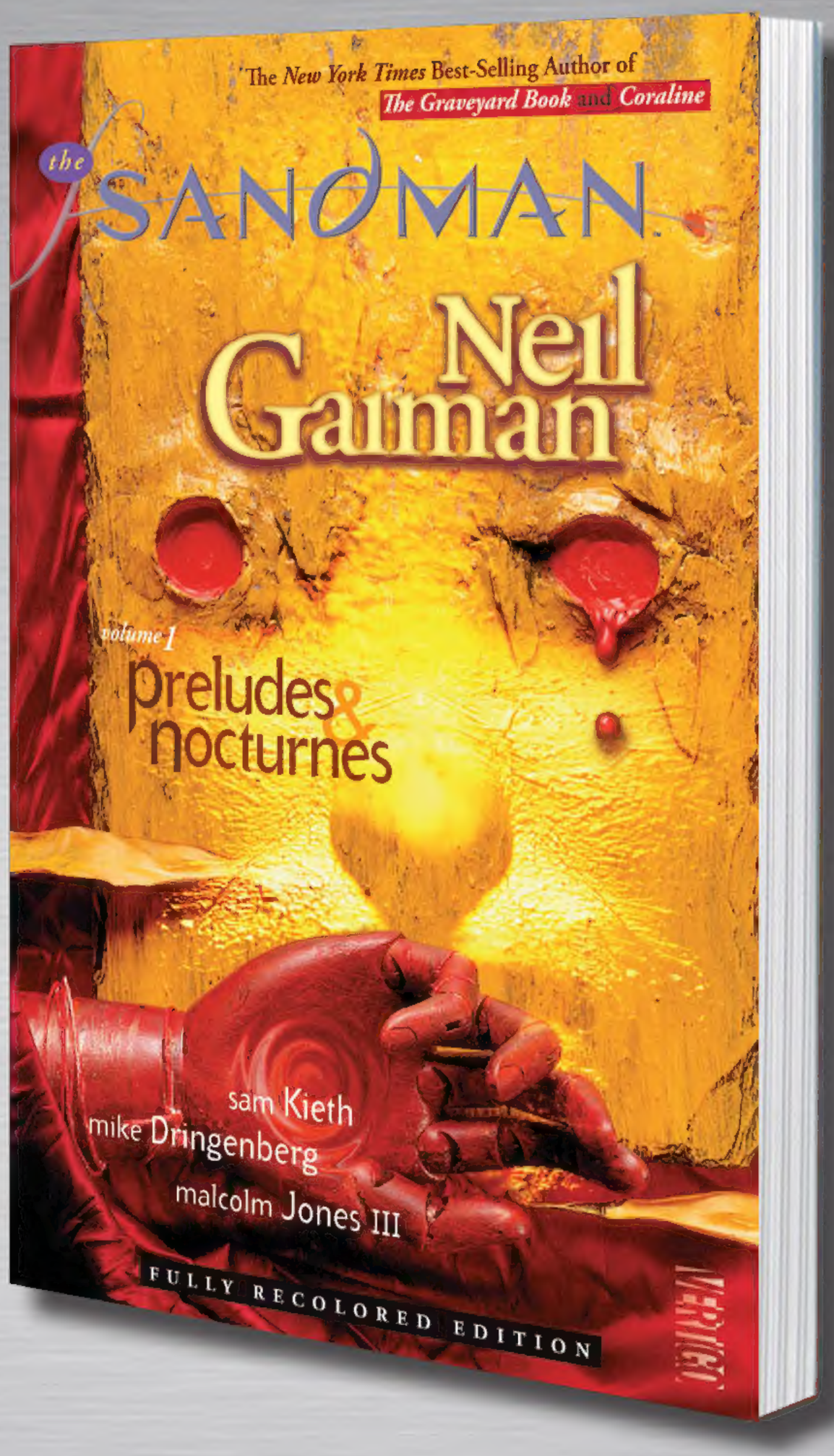


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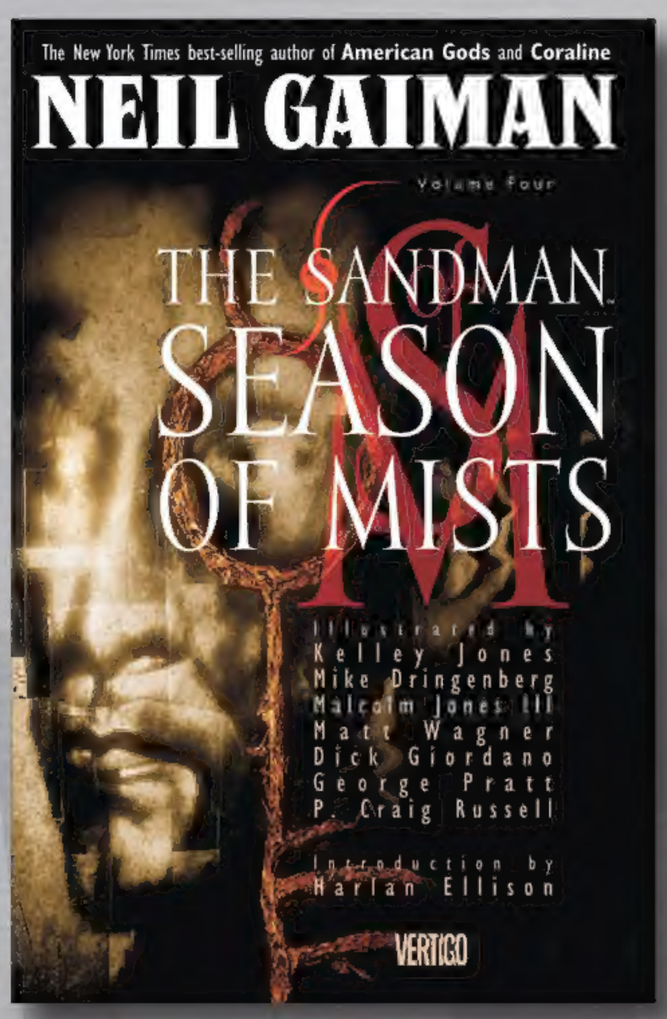


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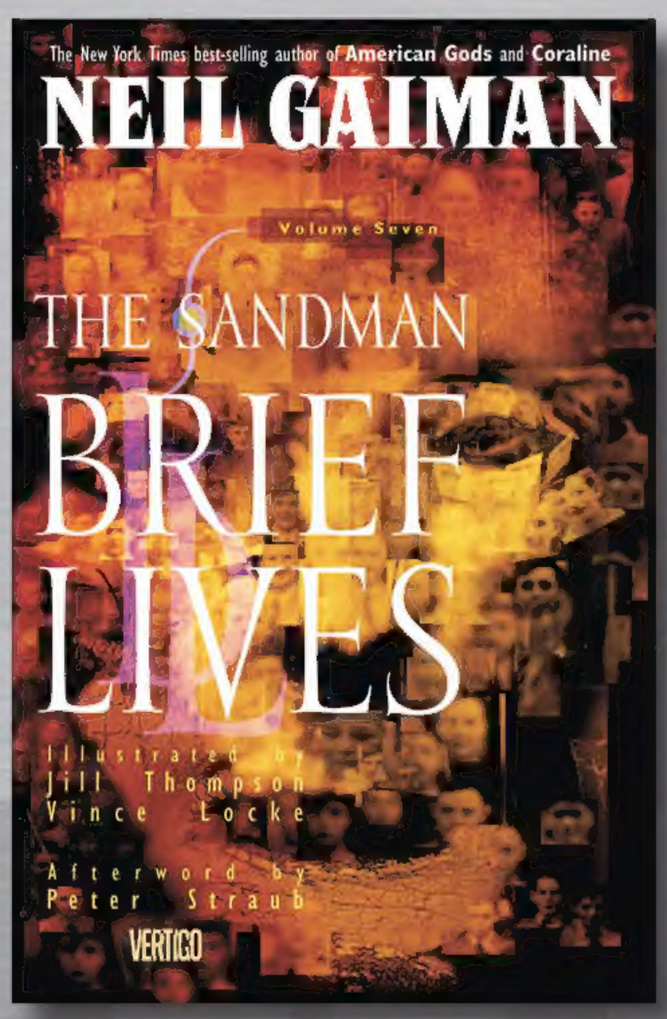


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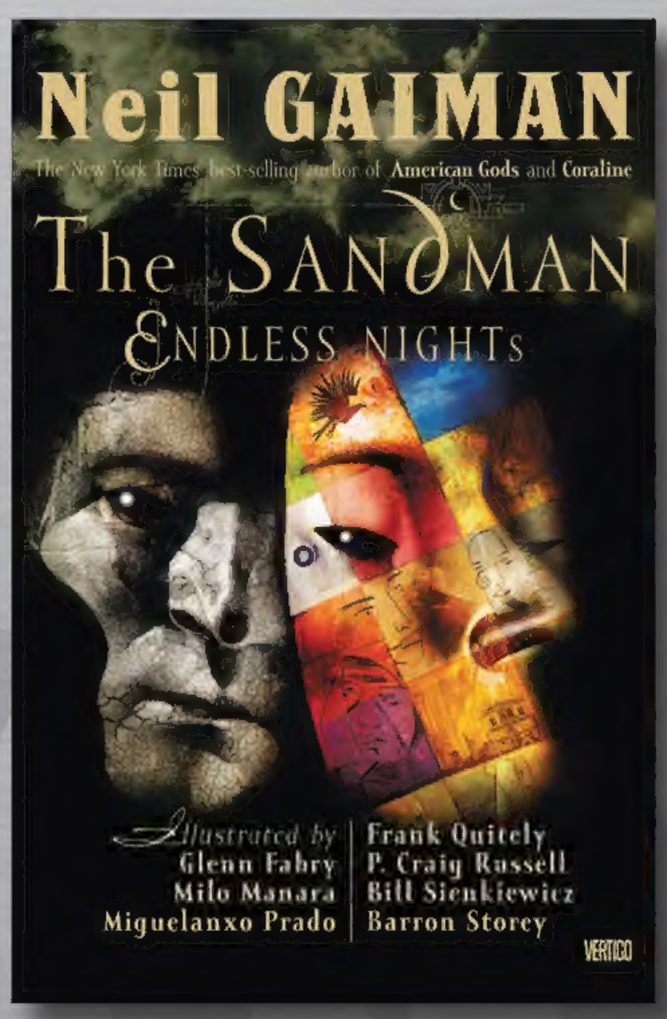
ENDLESS NIGHTS

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